

(Washington, DC) – Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) announced that he will support the health care reform bill, which is expected to come to the House floor for a vote this weekend.

“Despite the unquestionable need for health care reform, some have sought to dominate the health care reform discussion with fear mongering, misinterpretations, and misinformation,” noted Hastings. “It is time to move forward and pass this critically important bill to extend health coverage to millions of Americans.”

“I am getting a little tired of hearing some of my colleagues talk about socialism and the government take-over of health care. These individuals believe we should eliminate Medicare, eliminate Medicaid, eliminate the Social Security safety net, eliminate the Centers for Disease Control, and eliminate the National Institutes of Health. All of these are government-run programs. In the greatest country in the world, it is morally wrong for millions of our fellow Americans to not have affordable health care. We all should be willing to share in order to help the least of us,” Hastings further noted.

“The desire to pass the health care reform bill hits close to home. Florida has the sixth highest number of uninsured people in the country and the majority of the uninsured reside in the southern part of the state.”

Approximately four million Floridians live without health insurance and the state loses \$3.5 billion annually in uncompensated care. Floridians spend \$19.4 billion each year in out-of-pocket spending, and most of Florida’s small businesses are unable to afford health care

benefits for their employees. In the 23rd district alone, the reform bill would extend insurance coverage to 161,000 residents, improve Medicare coverage for nearly 80,000 beneficiaries, and provide tax credits and assistance to thousands of families and small businesses to make health insurance more affordable.

“Across this nation, Americans have lost their homes, jobs, health insurance, and hope. We cannot afford to back down. We must pass this health care bill and deliver the reform that Florida and this country need and deserve. I am committed to working with my colleagues in Congress to ensure that quality and affordable health care is no longer a privilege from some, but a guaranteed right for all,” said Hastings.

In Hastings’ district (FL-23), the health care reform bill will (Source – House Energy & Commerce Committee):

- Improve coverage for 290,000 residents with health insurance.
- Give tax credits and other assistance to up to 177,000 families and 22,500 small businesses to help them afford coverage.
- Improve Medicare for 79,000 beneficiaries, including closing the donut hole.
- Extend coverage to 161,000 uninsured residents.
- Guarantee that 24,600 residents with pre-existing conditions can obtain coverage.
- Protect 1,100 families from bankruptcy due to unaffordable health care costs.
- Allow 60,000 young adults to obtain coverage on their parents’ insurance plans.
- Provide millions of dollars in new funding for 21 community health centers.
- Reduce the cost of uncompensated care for hospitals and other health care providers by \$69 million annually.

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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